

Epiphany Racial Justice Group Reading and Media Resource List

BOOKS (ADULT)

(Organized By Last Name of Author)

Americanah (A Novel)

2013

Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche

The bestselling novel from the award-winning author of *We Should All Be Feminists* and *Dear Ijeawele*. The story of two Nigerians making their way in the U.S. and the UK, raising universal questions of race and belonging, the overseas experience for the African diaspora, and the search for identity and a home.

Ifemelu and Obinze are young and in love when they depart military-ruled Nigeria for the West. Beautiful, self-assured Ifemelu heads for America, where despite her academic success, she is forced to grapple with what it means to be black for the first time. Quiet, thoughtful Obinze had hoped to join her, but with post-9/11 America closed to him, he instead plunges into a dangerous, undocumented life in London. Fifteen years later, they reunite in a newly democratic Nigeria, and reignite their passion—for each other and for their homeland.

The New Jim Crow

2010

Michelle Alexander

Seldom does a book have the impact of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. Since it was first published in 2010, it has been cited in judicial decisions and has been adopted in campus-wide and community-wide reads; it helped inspire the creation of the Marshall Project and the new \$100 million Art for Justice Fund; it has been the winner of numerous prizes, including the prestigious NAACP Image Award; and it has spent nearly 250 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Most important of all, it has spawned a whole generation of criminal justice reform activists and organizations motivated by Michelle Alexander's unforgettable argument that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." As the Birmingham News proclaimed, it is "undoubtedly the most important book published in this century about the U.S."

Now, ten years after it was first published, The New Press is proud to issue a tenth-anniversary edition with a new preface by Michelle Alexander that discusses the impact the book has had and the state of the criminal justice reform movement today

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide

2016

Carol Anderson

From the Civil War to our combustible present, *White Rage* reframes our continuing conversation about race, chronicling the powerful forces opposed to black progress in America--now in paperback with a new afterword by the author, acclaimed historian Carol Anderson.

As Ferguson, Missouri, erupted in August 2014, and media commentators across the ideological spectrum referred to the angry response of African Americans as “black rage,” historian Carol Anderson wrote a remarkable op-ed in *The Washington Post* suggesting that this was, instead, “white rage at work. With so much attention on the flames,” she argued, “everyone had ignored the kindling.”

Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains. The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with the Black Codes and Jim Crow; the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South while taxpayer dollars financed segregated white private schools; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 triggered a coded but powerful response, the so-called Southern Strategy and the War on Drugs that disenfranchised millions of African Americans while propelling presidents Nixon and Reagan into the White House, and then the election of America's first black President, led to the expression of white rage that has been as relentless as it has been brutal.

Carefully linking these and other historical flashpoints when social progress for African Americans was countered by deliberate and cleverly crafted opposition, Anderson pulls back the veil that has long covered actions made in the name of protecting democracy, fiscal responsibility, or protection against fraud, rendering visible the long lineage of white rage. Compelling and dramatic in the unimpeachable history it relates, *White Rage* will add an important new dimension to the national conversation about race in America.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

1969

Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide. Her life story is told in the documentary film *And Still I Rise*, as seen on PBS's *American Masters*.

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local “powhitetrash.” At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors (“I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare”) will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.

Poetic and powerful, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* will touch hearts and change minds for as long as people read.

One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying our Democracy

2018

Carol Anderson

In her New York Times bestseller *White Rage*, Carol Anderson laid bare an insidious history of policies that have systematically impeded black progress in America, from 1865 to our combustible present. With *One Person, No Vote*, she chronicles a related history: the rollbacks to African American participation in the vote since the 2013 Supreme Court decision that eviscerated the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Known as the *Shelby* ruling, this decision effectively allowed districts with a demonstrated history of racial discrimination to change voting requirements without approval from the Department of Justice.

Focusing on the aftermath of *Shelby*, Anderson follows the astonishing story of government-dictated racial discrimination unfolding before our very eyes as more and more states adopt voter suppression laws. In gripping, enlightening detail she explains how voter suppression works, from photo ID requirements to gerrymandering to poll closures. And with vivid characters, she explores the resistance: the organizing, activism, and court battles to restore the basic right to vote to all Americans.

We are Not Equal: Understanding our Racial Divide

2018

Carol Anderson & Tonya Bolden

*Also included in the Teen Book List

This young adult adaptation of the *New York Times* bestselling *White Rage* is essential antiracist reading for teens. An NAACP Image Award finalist A Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year A NYPL Best Book for Teens

History texts often teach that the United States has made a straight line of progress toward Black equality. The reality is more complex: milestones like the end of slavery, school integration, and equal voting rights have all been met with racist legal and political maneuverings meant to limit that progress. *We Are Not Yet Equal* examines five of these moments: The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with Jim Crow laws; the promise of new opportunities in the North during the Great Migration was limited when blacks were physically blocked from moving away from the South; the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 led to laws that disenfranchised millions of African American voters and a War on Drugs that disproportionately targeted blacks; and the election of President Obama led to an outburst of violence including the death of Black teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri as well as the election of Donald Trump.

Including photographs and archival imagery and extra context, backmatter, and resources specifically for teens, this book provides essential history to help work for an equal future.

The Fire Next Time

1963

James Baldwin

A national bestseller when it first appeared in 1963, *The Fire Next Time* galvanized the nation and gave passionate voice to the emerging civil rights movement. At once a powerful evocation of James Baldwin's early life in Harlem and a disturbing examination of the consequences of racial injustice, the book is an intensely personal and provocative document. It consists of two "letters," written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, that exhort Americans, both black and white, to attack the terrible legacy of racism. Described by *The New York Times Book Review* as "sermon, ultimatum, confession, deposition, testament, and chronicle...all presented in searing, brilliant prose," *The Fire Next Time* stands as a classic of our literature.

I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness

2018

Austin Channing Brown

Austin Channing Brown's first encounter with a radicalized America came at age 7, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, "I had to learn what it means to love blackness," a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, speaker and expert who helps organizations practice genuine inclusion.

In a time when nearly all institutions (schools, churches, universities, businesses) claim to value "diversity" in their mission statements, *I'm Still Here* is a powerful account of how and why our actions so often fall short of our words. Austin writes in breathtaking detail about her journey to self-worth and the pitfalls that kill our attempts at racial justice, in stories that bear witness to the complexity of America's social fabric--from Black Cleveland neighborhoods to private schools in the middle-class suburbs, from prison walls to the boardrooms at majority-white organizations.

For readers who have engaged with America's legacy on race through the writing of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Michael Eric Dyson, *I'm Still Here* is an illuminating look at how white, middle-class, Evangelicalism has participated in an era of rising racial hostility, inviting the reader to confront apathy, recognize God's ongoing work in the world, and discover how blackness--if we let it--can save us all.

Between the World and Me

2015

Ta-Nehisi Coates

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bravely confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

God of the Oppressed

1997

James H. Cone

In his reflections on God, Jesus, suffering, and liberation, James H. Cone relates the gospel message to the experience of the black community. But a wider theme of the book is the role that social and historical context plays in framing the questions we address to God as well as the mode of the answers provided.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree

2011

James H. Cone

The Cross and the Lynching Tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African American community. In this powerful new work, theologian James H. Cone explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and spirituality of African Americans. Noting their powerful evocation of suffering and liberation, this unique book opens up vulnerably about the legacy of slavery and racism, and African American identity in America today.

Evicted

2016

Matthew Desmond

In *Evicted*, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they each struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (The Nation), “vivid and unsettling” (New York Review of Books), *Evicted* transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of twenty-first-century America’s most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

White Fragility: Why it is so hard for white people to talk about racism

2018

Robin DiAngelo

The *New York Times* best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged that serve to maintain racial inequality

In this “vital, necessary, and beautiful book” (Michael Eric Dyson), antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’” (Claudia Rankine). Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice

2017

Gregory Ellison

Drawing on all the community's collective voices--from "doctors to drug dealers"--*Fearless Dialogues* is a groundbreaking program that seeks real solutions to problems of chronic unemployment, violence, and hopelessness. In cities around the United States and now the world, the program's founder, Gregory C.

Ellison, and his team create conversations among community members who have never spoken to one another, the goal of which are real, implementable, and lasting changes to the life of the community.

These community transformations are based on both face-to-face encounters and substantive analysis of the problems the community faces. In *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*, Ellison makes this same kind of analysis available to readers, walking them through the steps that must be taken to find common ground in our divided communities and then to implement genuine and lasting change.

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed

1968

Paulo Freire

First published in Portuguese in 1968, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated and published in English in 1970. The methodology of the late Paulo Freire has helped to empower countless impoverished and illiterate people throughout the world. Freire's work has taken on especial urgency in the United States and Western Europe, where the creation of a permanent underclass among the underprivileged and minorities in cities and urban centers is increasingly accepted as the norm.

With a substantive new introduction on Freire's life and the remarkable impact of this book by writer and Freire confidant and authority Donaldo Macedo, this anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will inspire a new generation of educators, students, and general readers for years to come.

Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America

2018

Jennifer Harvey

* *This book is also included in the Parenting Resource Section of this list.*

With a foreword by Tim Wise, *Raising White Kids* is for families, churches, educators, and communities who want to equip their children to be active and able participants in a society that is becoming one of the most racially diverse in the world while remaining full of racial tensions. For white people who are committed to equity and justice, living in a nation that remains racially unjust and deeply segregated creates unique conundrums.

These conundrums begin early in life and impact the racial development of white children in powerful ways. What can we do within our homes, communities and schools? Should we teach our children to be "colorblind"? Or, should we teach them to notice race? What roles do we want to equip them to play in addressing racism when they encounter it? What strategies will help our children learn to function well in a diverse nation?

Talking about race means naming the reality of white privilege and hierarchy. How do we talk about race honestly, then, without making our children feel bad about being white? Most importantly, how do we do any of this in age-appropriate ways?

While a great deal of public discussion exists in regard to the impact of race and racism on children of color, meaningful dialogue about and resources for understanding the impact of race on white children are woefully absent. *Raising White Kids* steps into that void.

Dear White Christians

2014

Jennifer Harvey

In this provocative book Jennifer Harvey argues for a radical shift in how justice-committed white Christians think about race. She calls for moving away from the reconciliation paradigm that currently dominates interracial relations and embracing instead a reparations paradigm.

Harvey presents an insightful historical analysis of the painful fissures that emerged among activist Christians toward the end of the Civil Rights movement, and she shows the necessity of bringing "white" racial identity into clear view in order to counter today's oppressive social structures.

A deeply constructive, hopeful work, *Dear White Christians* will help readers envision new racial possibilities, including concrete examples of contemporary reparations initiatives. This book is for any who care about the gospel call to justice but feel stuck trying to get there, given the ongoing prevalence of deep racial divisions in the church and society at large.

The Sun Does Shine: How I found life and freedom on death row

2018

Anthony Ray Hinton

A powerful, revealing story of hope, love, justice, and the power of reading by a man who spent thirty years on death row for a crime he didn't commit.

"An amazing and heartwarming story, it restores our faith in the inherent goodness of humanity."
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu

In 1985, Anthony Ray Hinton was arrested and charged with two counts of capital murder in Alabama. Stunned, confused, and only twenty-nine years old, Hinton knew that it was a case of mistaken identity and believed that the truth would prove his innocence and ultimately set him free.

But with no money and a different system of justice for a poor black man in the South, Hinton was sentenced to death by electrocution. He spent his first three years on Death Row at Holman State Prison in agonizing silence—full of despair and anger toward all those who had sent an innocent man to his death. But as Hinton realized and accepted his fate, he resolved not only to survive, but find a way to live on Death Row. For the next twenty-seven years he was a beacon—transforming not only his own spirit, but those of his fellow inmates, fifty-four of whom were executed mere feet from his cell. With the help of civil rights attorney and bestselling author of *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson, Hinton won his release in 2015.

With a foreword by Stevenson, *The Sun Does Shine* is an extraordinary testament to the power of hope sustained through the darkest times. Destined to be a classic memoir of wrongful imprisonment and freedom won, Hinton's memoir tells his dramatic thirty-year journey and shows how you can take away a man's freedom, but you can't take away his imagination, humor, or joy.

The ABCs of Diversity: Helping Kids (and Ourselves!) Embrace Our Differences

2020

Carolyn B. Helsel/Y. Joy Harris-Smith

How do we help our children respect, embrace, and learn from those who look and think differently than they do? What are the "ABCs" of diversity that can help guide their path?

Written by two mothers and educators — one black, one white — *The ABCs of Diversity* equips parents, teachers, and community leaders to address children of all ages on complicated topics of race, gender, class, religion, political affiliation, ability, nationality, and sexual orientation. The authors employ three sets of ABCs throughout the book to help guide the conversations: our automatic ABCs; the ABCs of intentional engagement; and the ABCs of a more just society.

This book includes specific resources and activities for younger and older children that parents and community leaders can employ to encourage compassion and empathy. An educational and practical resource for parents, teachers, community leaders, ministry personnel, human resources directors, and librarians. Questions at the end of each chapter invite reflection and further discussion.

Chapters include: The ABCs of Diversity; Identities We're Assigned at Birth; Identity and Diversity in Action; Disentangling Gender and Sexuality; Relearning Race; Fears of Fitting Out: Religious Differences; Social Media and Diversity; Old Enough to Know Better; and Choosing our Place in History. A robust appendix includes diversity reading lists for kids, curriculum activities for teachers and parents of children and youth, scripts for parents, and more

Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"

2018

Zora Neal Hurston

A major literary event: a newly published work from the author of the American classic *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, with a foreword from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker, brilliantly illuminates the horror and injustices of slavery as it tells the true story of one of the last-known survivors of the Atlantic slave trade—abducted from Africa on the last "Black Cargo" ship to arrive in the United States.

In 1927, Zora Neale Hurston went to Plateau, Alabama, just outside Mobile, to interview eighty-six-year-old Cudjo Lewis. Of the millions of men, women, and children transported from Africa to America as slaves, Cudjo was then the only person alive to tell the story of this integral part of the nation's history. Hurston was there to record Cudjo's firsthand account of the raid that led to his capture and bondage fifty years after the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed in the United States.

In 1931, Hurston returned to Plateau, the African-centric community three miles from Mobile founded by Cudjo and other former slaves from his ship. Spending more than three months there, she talked in depth with Cudjo about the details of his life. During those weeks, the young writer and the elderly formerly enslaved man ate peaches and watermelon that grew in the backyard and talked about Cudjo's past—memories from his childhood in Africa, the horrors of being captured and held in a barracoon for selection by American slavers, the harrowing experience of the Middle Passage packed with more than 100 other souls aboard the *Clotilda*, and the years he spent in slavery until the end of the Civil War. Based on those interviews, featuring Cudjo's unique vernacular, and written from Hurston's perspective with the compassion and singular style that have made her one of the preeminent American authors of the twentieth-century, *Barracoon* masterfully illustrates the tragedy of slavery and of one life forever defined by it. Offering insight into the pernicious legacy that continues to haunt us all, black and white, this poignant and powerful work is an invaluable contribution to our shared history and culture. The epic tale of Janie Crawford, whose quest for identity takes her on a journey during which she learns what love is, experiences life's joys and sorrows, and come home to herself in peace. Her passionate story prompted Alice Walker to say, "There is no book more important to me than this one."

Their Eyes Were Watching God

1937

Zora Neal Hurston

When first published in 1937, this novel about a proud, independent black woman was generally dismissed by male reviewers. Out of print for almost thirty years, but since its reissue in paperback edition by the University of Illinois Press in 1978, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has become the most widely read and highly acclaimed novel in the canon of African-American literature.

With haunting sympathy and piercing immediacy, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* tells the story of Janie Crawford's evolving selfhood through three marriages. Light-skinned, long-haired, dreamy as a child, Janie grows up expecting better treatment than she gets until she meets Tea Cake, a younger man who engages her heart and spirit in equal measure and gives her the chance to enjoy life without being a man's mule or adornment. Though Janie's story does not end happily, it does draw to a satisfying conclusion. Janie is one black woman who doesn't have to live lost in sorrow, bitterness, fear, or foolish romantic dreams, instead Janie proclaims that she has done "two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves."

Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race

2016

Debby Irving

For twenty-five years, Debby Irving sensed inexplicable racial tensions in her personal and professional relationships. As a colleague and neighbor, she worried about offending people she dearly wanted to befriend. As an arts administrator, she didn't understand why her diversity efforts lacked traction. As a teacher, she found her best efforts to reach out to students and families of color left her wondering what she was missing. Then, in 2009, one "aha!" moment launched an adventure of discovery and insight that drastically shifted her worldview and upended her life plan. In *Waking Up White*, Irving tells her often cringe-worthy story with such openness that readers will turn every page rooting for her—and ultimately for all of us.

The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race

2011

Willie James Jennings

Why has Christianity, a religion premised upon neighborly love, failed in its attempts to heal social divisions? In this ambitious and wide-ranging work, Willie James Jennings delves deep into the late medieval soil in which the modern Christian imagination grew, to reveal how Christianity's highly refined process of socialization has inadvertently created and maintained segregated societies. A probing study of the cultural fragmentation—social, spatial, and racial—that took root in the Western mind, this book shows how Christianity has consistently forged Christian nations rather than encouraging genuine communion between disparate groups and individuals.

Weaving together the stories of Zurara, the royal chronicler of Prince Henry, the Jesuit theologian Jose de Acosta, the famed Anglican Bishop John William Colenso, and the former slave writer Olaudah Equiano, Jennings narrates a tale of loss, forgetfulness, and missed opportunities for the transformation of Christian communities. Touching on issues of slavery, geography, Native American history, Jewish-Christian relations, literacy, and translation, he brilliantly exposes how the loss of land and the

supersessionist ideas behind the Christian missionary movement are both deeply implicated in the invention of race.

Using his bold, creative, and courageous critique to imagine a truly cosmopolitan citizenship that transcends geopolitical, nationalist, ethnic, and racial boundaries, Jennings charts, with great vision, new ways of imagining ourselves, our communities, and the landscapes we inhabit.

How to be an Anti-Racist

2019

Ibram X. Kendi

Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism—and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value; its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class and culture and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves. In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas—from the most basic concepts to visionary possibilities—that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and in ourselves.

Kendi weaves an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law, and science with his own personal story of awakening to antiracism. This is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society.

The Atlas of Reds and Blues: A Novel

2020

Devi S. Laskar

When a woman—known only as Mother—moves her family from Atlanta to its wealthy suburbs, she discovers that neither the times nor the people have changed since her childhood in a small Southern town. Despite the intervening decades, Mother is met with the same questions: *Where are you from? No, where are you really from?* The American-born daughter of Bengali immigrants, she finds that her answer—*Here*—is never enough. Mother’s simmering anger breaks through one morning, when, during a police raid on her home, she finally refuses to be complacent—and suffers all-too-familiar consequences.

Heavy: an American Memoir

2018

Kiese Laymon

In *Heavy*, Laymon writes eloquently and honestly about growing up a hard-headed black son to a complicated and brilliant black mother in Jackson, Mississippi. From his early experiences of sexual violence, to his suspension from college, to time in New York as a college professor, Laymon charts his complex relationship with his mother, grandmother, anorexia, obesity, sex, writing, and ultimately gambling. *Heavy* is a “gorgeous, gutting...generous” (*The New York Times*) memoir that combines personal stories with piercing intellect to reflect both on the strife of American society and on Laymon’s experiences with abuse. By attempting to name secrets and lies he and his mother spent a lifetime avoiding, he asks us to confront the terrifying possibility that few in this nation actually know how to responsibly love, and even fewer want to live under the weight of actually becoming free.

Walking in the Wind

2015

John Lewis

The award-winning national bestseller, *Walking with the Wind*, is one of our most important records of the American civil rights movement. Told by John Lewis, who Cornel West calls a “national treasure,” this is a gripping first-hand account of the fight for civil rights and the courage it takes to change a nation.

In 1957, a teenaged boy named John Lewis left a cotton farm in Alabama for Nashville, the epicenter of the struggle for civil rights in America. Lewis’s adherence to nonviolence guided that critical time and established him as one of the movement’s most charismatic and courageous leaders. Lewis’s leadership in the Nashville Movement—a student-led effort to desegregate the city of Nashville using sit-in techniques based on the teachings of Gandhi—set the tone for major civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. Lewis traces his role in the pivotal Selma marches, Bloody Sunday, and the Freedom Rides. Inspired by his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lewis’s vision and perseverance altered history. In 1986, he ran and won a congressional seat in Georgia, and remains in office to this day, continuing to enact change.

Darktown: A Novel

2017

Thomas Mullen

Responding to orders from on high, the Atlanta Police Department is forced to hire its first black officers, including war veterans Lucius Boggs and Tommy Smith. The newly minted policemen are met with deep hostility by their white peers; they aren’t allowed to arrest white suspects, drive squad cars, or set foot in the police headquarters.

When a woman who was last seen in a car driven by a white man turns up dead, Boggs and Smith suspect white cops are behind it. Their investigation sets them up against a brutal cop, Dunlow, who has long run the neighborhood as his own, and his partner, Rakestraw, a young progressive who may or may not be willing to make allies across color lines. Among shady moonshiners, duplicitous madams, crooked lawmen, and the constant restrictions of Jim Crow, Boggs and Smith will risk their new jobs, and their lives, while navigating a dangerous world—a world on the cusp of great change.

A vivid, smart, intricately plotted crime saga that explores the timely issues of race, law enforcement, and the uneven scales of justice.

Learning From the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil

2019

Susan Neiman

As an increasingly polarized America fights over the legacy of racism, Susan Neiman, author of the contemporary philosophical classic *Evil in Modern Thought*, asks what we can learn from the Germans about confronting the evils of the past.

In the wake of white nationalist attacks, the ongoing debate over reparations, and the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments and the contested memories they evoke, Susan Neiman’s *Learning*

from the Germans delivers an urgently needed perspective on how a country can come to terms with its historical wrongdoings. Neiman is a white woman who came of age in the civil rights–era South and a Jewish woman who has spent much of her adult life in Berlin. Working from this unique perspective, she combines philosophical reflection, personal stories, and interviews with both Americans and Germans who are grappling with the evils of their own national histories.

Through discussions with Germans, including Jan Philipp Reemtsma, who created the breakthrough Crimes of the Wehrmacht exhibit, and Friedrich Schorlemmer, the East German dissident preacher, Neiman tells the story of the long and difficult path Germans faced in their effort to atone for the crimes of the Holocaust. In the United States, she interviews James Meredith about his battle for equality in Mississippi and Bryan Stevenson about his monument to the victims of lynching, as well as lesser-known social justice activists in the South, to provide a compelling picture of the work contemporary Americans are doing to confront our violent history. In clear and gripping prose, Neiman urges us to consider the nuanced forms that evil can assume, so that we can recognize and avoid them in the future.

Born a Crime

2016

Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah’s unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of *The Daily Show* began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents’ indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa’s tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.

Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man’s relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mother’s unconventional, unconditional love.

So You Want to Talk about Race

2018

Ijeoma Oluo

In this New York Times bestseller, Ijeoma Oluo explores the complex reality of today’s racial landscape—from white privilege and police brutality to systemic discrimination and the Black Lives Matter

movement--offering straightforward clarity that readers need to contribute to the dismantling of the racial divide.

In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Editor at Large of The Establishment Ijeoma Oluo offers a contemporary, accessible take on the racial landscape in America, addressing head-on such issues as privilege, police brutality, intersectionality, micro-aggressions, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the "N" word. Perfectly positioned to bridge the gap between people of color and white Americans struggling with race complexities, Oluo answers the questions readers don't dare ask, and explains the concepts that continue to elude everyday Americans.

Oluo is an exceptional writer with a rare ability to be straightforward, funny, and effective in her coverage of sensitive, hyper-charged issues in America. Her messages are passionate but finely tuned and crystalize ideas that would otherwise be vague by empowering them with aha-moment clarity. Her writing brings to mind voices like Ta-Nehisi Coates, Roxane Gay, Jessica Valenti in *Full Frontal Feminism*, and a young Gloria Naylor, particularly in Naylor's seminal essay "The Meaning of a Word."

WHITE BLOOD: A LYRIC OF VIRGINIA

2020

Kiki Petrosino

In her fourth full-length book, *White Blood: A Lyric of Virginia*, Kiki Petrosino turns her gaze to Virginia, where she digs into her genealogical and intellectual roots, while contemplating the knotty legacies of slavery and discrimination in the Upper South. From a stunning double crown sonnet, to erasure poetry contained within DNA testing results, the poems in this collection are as wide-ranging in form as they are bountiful in wordplay and truth. In her poem "The Shop at Monticello," she writes: "I'm a black body in this Commonwealth, which turned black bodies/ into money. Now, I have money to spend on little trinkets to remind me/ of this fact. I'm a money machine & my body constitutes the common wealth." Speaking to history, loss, and injustice with wisdom, innovation, and a scientific determination to find the poetic truth, *White Blood* plants Petrosino's name ever more firmly in the contemporary canon.

Stamped: Racism, AntiRacism and You

2020

Jason Reynolds & Ibram X. Kendi

* This book is categorized as "Teen/Young Adult" and is included in the Parenting Resources of this list

A timely, crucial, and empowering exploration of racism--and antiracism--in America

This is NOT a history book.

This is a book about the here and now.

A book to help us better understand why we are where we are.

A book about race.

The construct of race has always been used to gain and keep power, to create dynamics that separate and silence. This remarkable reimagining of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America, and inspires hope for an antiracist future. It takes you on a race journey from then to now, shows you why we feel how we feel, and why the poison of racism lingers. It also proves that while racist ideas have always been easy to fabricate and distribute, they can also be discredited.

Through a gripping, fast-paced, and energizing narrative written by beloved award-winner Jason Reynolds, this book shines a light on the many insidious forms of racist ideas—and on ways readers can identify and stamp out racist thoughts in their daily lives

The Color of Law: The forgotten history of how our government segregated America

2017

Richard Rothstein

In this groundbreaking history of the modern American metropolis, Richard Rothstein, a leading authority on housing policy, explodes the myth that America's cities came to be racially divided through *de facto* segregation—that is, through individual prejudices, income differences, or the actions of private institutions like banks and real estate agencies. Rather, *The Color of Law* incontrovertibly makes clear that it was *de jure* segregation—the laws and policy decisions passed by local, state, and federal governments—that actually promoted the discriminatory patterns that continue to this day.

Through extraordinary revelations and extensive research that Ta-Nehisi Coates has lauded as "brilliant" (*The Atlantic*), Rothstein comes to chronicle nothing less than an untold story that begins in the 1920s, showing how this process of *de jure* segregation began with explicit racial zoning, as millions of African Americans moved in a great historical migration from the south to the north.

As Jane Jacobs established in her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, it was the deeply flawed urban planning of the 1950s that created many of the impoverished neighborhoods we know. Now, Rothstein expands our understanding of this history, showing how government policies led to the creation of officially segregated public housing and the demolition of previously integrated neighborhoods. While urban areas rapidly deteriorated, the great American suburbanization of the post-World War II years was spurred on by federal subsidies for builders on the condition that no homes be sold to African Americans. Finally, Rothstein shows how police and prosecutors brutally upheld these standards by supporting violent resistance to black families in white neighborhoods.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited future discrimination but did nothing to reverse residential patterns that had become deeply embedded. Yet recent outbursts of violence in cities like Baltimore, Ferguson, and Minneapolis show us precisely how the legacy of these earlier eras contributes to persistent racial unrest. "The American landscape will never look the same to readers of this important book" (Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund), as Rothstein's invaluable examination shows that only by relearning this history can we finally pave the way for the nation to remedy its unconstitutional past.

Me and White Supremacy: How to Recognize Your Privilege, Combat Racism and Change the World

2020

Layla F. Saad

The *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller! This eye-opening book challenges you to do the essential work of unpacking your biases, and helps white people take action and dismantle the privilege within themselves so that you can stop (often unconsciously) inflicting damage on people of color, and in turn, help other white people do better, too.

Based on the viral Instagram challenge that captivated participants worldwide, *Me and White Supremacy* takes readers on a 28-day journey, complete with journal prompts, to do the necessary and vital work that can ultimately lead to improving race relations.

Updated and expanded from the original workbook (downloaded by nearly 100,000 people), *this critical text* helps you take the work deeper by adding more historical and cultural contexts, sharing moving stories and anecdotes, and including expanded definitions, examples, and further resources, giving you the language to understand racism, and to dismantle your own biases, whether you are using the book on your own, with a book club, or looking to start family activism in your own home.

This book will walk you step-by-step through the work of examining:

- Examining your own white privilege
- What allyship really means
- Anti-blackness, racial stereotypes, and cultural appropriation
- Changing the way that you view and respond to race
- How to continue the work to create social change

Awareness leads to action, and action leads to change. For readers of *White Fragility*, *White Rage*, *So You Want To Talk About Race*, *The New Jim Crow*, *How to Be an Anti-Racist* and more who are ready to closely examine their own beliefs and biases and do the work it will take to create social change.

Rising out of Hatred: the Awakening of a former White Nationalist

2018

Eli Saslow

Derek Black grew up at the epicenter of white nationalism. His father founded Stormfront, the largest racist community on the Internet. His godfather, David Duke, was a KKK Grand Wizard. By the time Derek turned nineteen, he had become an elected politician with his own daily radio show—already regarded as the “the leading light” of the burgeoning white nationalist movement. “We can infiltrate,” Derek once told a crowd of white nationalists. “We can take the country back.”

Then he went to college. At New College of Florida, he continued to broadcast his radio show in secret each morning, living a double life until a classmate uncovered his identity and sent an email to the entire school. “Derek Black ... white supremacist, radio host ... New College student???” The ensuing uproar overtook one of the most liberal colleges in the country. Some students protested Derek’s presence on campus, forcing him to reconcile for the first time with the ugliness of his beliefs. Other students found the courage to reach out to him, including an Orthodox Jew who invited Derek to attend weekly Shabbat dinners. It was because of those dinners—and the wide-ranging relationships formed at that table—that Derek started to question the science, history, and prejudices behind his worldview. As white nationalism infiltrated the political mainstream, Derek decided to confront the damage he had done.

Rising Out of Hatred tells the story of how white-supremacist ideas migrated from the far-right fringe to the White House through the intensely personal saga of one man who eventually disavowed everything he was taught to believe, at tremendous personal cost. With great empathy and narrative verve, Eli Saslow asks what Derek’s story can tell us about America’s increasingly divided nature. This is a book to help us understand the American moment and to help us better understand one another.

Evil: The Science Behind Humanity’s Dark Side

2019

Julie Shaw

What is it about evil that we find so compelling? From our obsession with serial killers to violence in pop culture, we seem inescapably drawn to the stories of monstrous acts and the aberrant people who commit them. But evil, Dr. Julia Shaw argues, is all relative, rooted in our unique cultures. What one may consider normal, like sex before marriage, eating meat, or being a banker, others find abhorrent. And if evil is only in the eye of the beholder, can it be said to exist at all? In *Evil*, Shaw uses case studies from academia, examples from and popular culture, and anecdotes from everyday life to break down complex information and concepts like the neuroscience of evil, the psychology of bloodlust, and workplace misbehavior. This is a wide-ranging exploration into a fascinating, darkly compelling subject.

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

2014

Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria

2017 (revised)

Beverly Daniel Tatum

* *This book is also included in the Parenting Resource Section of this list.*

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, White, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This fully revised edition is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of race in America.

Can We Talk about Race? And Other Conversations in the Era of School Resegregation

2017

Beverly Tatum

Beverly Daniel Tatum emerged on the national scene in 1997 with “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?,” a book that spoke to a wide audience about the psychological dynamics of race relations in America. Tatum's unique ability to get people talking about race captured the attention of many, from Oprah Winfrey to President Clinton, who invited her to join him in his nationally televised dialogues on race.

In her first book since that pathbreaking success, Tatum starts with a warning call about the increasing but underreported resegregation of America. A self-described “integration baby”—she was born in

1954—Tatum sees our growing isolation from each other as deeply problematic, and she believes that schools can be key institutions for forging connections across the racial divide.

In this ambitious, accessible book, Tatum examines some of the most resonant issues in American education and race relations:

- The need of African American students to see themselves reflected in curricula and institutions
- How unexamined racial attitudes can negatively affect minority-student achievement
- The possibilities—and complications—of intimate crossracial friendships

Tatum approaches all these topics with the blend of analysis and storytelling that make her one of our most persuasive and engaging commentators on race.

Can We Talk About Race? launches a collaborative lecture and book series between Beacon Press and Simmons College, which aims to reinvigorate a crucial national public conversation on race, education and democracy.

The Hate U Give: A Novel

2017

Angie Thomas

* This book was made into a movie which is listed in the Movie/Documentary Section of this list.

* This book is also listed in the Parenting Resource section of this list

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.

But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

On the Come Up: A Novel

2019

Angie Thomas

* This book is also listed in the Parent Resource Section of this List.

Sixteen-year-old Bri wants to be one of the greatest rappers of all time. Or at least win her first battle. As the daughter of an underground hip hop legend who died right before he hit big, Bri's got massive shoes to fill.

But it's hard to get your come up when you're labeled a hoodlum at school, and your fridge at home is empty after your mom loses her job. So Bri pours her anger and frustration into her first song, which goes viral . . . for all the wrong reasons.

Bri soon finds herself at the center of a controversy, portrayed by the media as more menace than MC. But with an eviction notice staring her family down, Bri doesn't just want to make it—she *has* to. Even if it means becoming the very thing the public has made her out to be.

Insightful, unflinching, and full of heart, *On the Come Up* is an ode to hip hop from one of the most influential literary voices of a generation. It is the story of fighting for your dreams, even as the odds are stacked against you; and about how, especially for young black people, freedom of speech isn't always free.

Jesus and the Disinherited

1996

Howard Thurman

In this classic theological treatise, the acclaimed theologian and religious leader Howard Thurman (1900-1981) demonstrates how the gospel may be read as a manual of resistance for the poor and disenfranchised. Jesus is a partner in the pain of the oppressed and the example of His life offers a solution to ending the descent into moral nihilism. Hatred does not empower--it decays. Only through self-love and love of one another can God's justice prevail.

The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism

2019

Jemar Tisby

The Color of Compromise takes readers on a historical journey: from America's early colonial days through slavery and the Civil War, covering the tragedy of Jim Crow laws and the victories of the Civil Rights era, to today's Black Lives Matter movement. Author Jemar Tisby reveals the obvious—and the far more subtle—ways the American church has compromised what the Bible teaches about human dignity and equality.

Tisby uncovers the roots of sustained injustice in the American church, highlighting the cultural and institutional tables that need to be turned in order to bring about real and lasting progress between black and white people. Through a story-driven survey of American Christianity's racial past, he exposes the concrete and chilling ways people of faith have actively worked against racial justice, as well as the deafening silence of the white evangelical majority. Tisby shows that while there has been progress in fighting racism, historically the majority of the American church has failed to speak out against this evil. This ongoing complicity is a stain upon the church, and sadly, it continues today.

Tisby does more than diagnose the problem, however. He charts a path forward with intriguing ideas that further the conversation as he challenges us to reverse these patterns and systems of complicity with bold, courageous, and immediate action. *The Color of Compromise* provides an accurate diagnosis for a racially divided American church and suggests creative ways to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment among God's people.

The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the present

2019

David Treuer

A sweeping history—and counter-narrative—of Native American life from the Wounded Knee massacre to the present.

The received idea of Native American history—as promulgated by books like Dee Brown’s mega-bestselling 1970 *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*—has been that American Indian history essentially ended with the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee. Not only did one hundred fifty Sioux die at the hands of the U. S. Cavalry, the sense was, but Native civilization did as well.

Growing up Ojibwe on a reservation in Minnesota, training as an anthropologist, and researching Native life past and present for his nonfiction and novels, David Treuer has uncovered a different narrative. Because they did not disappear—and not despite but rather because of their intense struggles to preserve their language, their traditions, their families, and their very existence—the story of American Indians since the end of the nineteenth century to the present is one of unprecedented resourcefulness and reinvention.

In *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, Treuer melds history with reportage and memoir. Tracing the tribes’ distinctive cultures from first contact, he explores how the depredations of each era spawned new modes of survival. The devastating seizures of land gave rise to increasingly sophisticated legal and political maneuvering that put the lie to the myth that Indians don’t know or care about property. The forced assimilation of their children at government-run boarding schools incubated a unifying Native identity. Conscription in the US military and the pull of urban life brought Indians into the mainstream and modern times, even as it steered the emerging shape of self-rule and spawned a new generation of resistance. *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee* is the essential, intimate story of a resilient people in a transformative era.

The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World

2014

Desmond Tutu & Mpho Tutu

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chair of The Elders, and Chair of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, along with his daughter, the Reverend Mpho Tutu, offer a manual on the art of forgiveness—helping us to realize that we are all capable of healing and transformation.

Tutu’s role as the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission taught him much about forgiveness. If you asked anyone what they thought was going to happen to South Africa after apartheid, almost universally it was predicted that the country would be devastated by a comprehensive bloodbath. Yet, instead of revenge and retribution, this new nation chose to tread the difficult path of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Each of us has a deep need to forgive and to be forgiven. After much reflection on the process of forgiveness, Tutu has seen that there are four important steps to healing: Admitting the wrong and acknowledging the harm; Telling one’s story and witnessing the anguish; Asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness; and renewing or releasing the relationship. Forgiveness is hard work. Sometimes it even feels like an impossible task. But it is only through walking this fourfold path that Tutu says we can free ourselves of the endless and unyielding cycle of pain and retribution. *The Book of Forgiving* is both a touchstone and a tool, offering Tutu’s wise advice and showing the way to experience forgiveness. Ultimately, forgiving is the only means we have to heal ourselves and our aching world.

America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America

2017

Jim Wallis

America's problem with race has deep roots, with the country's foundation tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another. Racism is truly our nation's original sin.

"It's time we right this unacceptable wrong," says bestselling author and leading Christian activist Jim Wallis. Fifty years ago, Wallis was driven away from his faith by a white church that considered dealing with racism to be taboo. His participation in the civil rights movement brought him back when he discovered a faith that commands racial justice. Yet as recent tragedies confirm, we continue to suffer from the legacy of racism. The old patterns of white privilege are colliding with the changing demographics of a diverse nation. The church has been slow to respond, and Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week.

In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians--particularly white Christians--urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing.

Whenever divided cultures and gridlocked power structures fail to end systemic sin, faith communities can help lead the way to grassroots change. Probing yet positive, biblically rooted yet highly practical, this book shows people of faith how they can work together to overcome the embedded racism in America, galvanizing a movement to cross the bridge to a multiracial church and a new America.

The Nickel Boys (A Novel)

2019

Colson Whitehead

In this bravura follow-up to the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award-winning #1 New York Times bestseller *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead brilliantly dramatizes another strand of American history through the story of two boys sentenced to a hellish reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

When Elwood Curtis, a black boy growing up in 1960s Tallahassee, is unfairly sentenced to a juvenile reformatory called the Nickel Academy, he finds himself trapped in a grotesque chamber of horrors. Elwood's only salvation is his friendship with fellow "delinquent" Turner, which deepens despite Turner's conviction that Elwood is hopelessly naive, that the world is crooked, and that the only way to survive is to scheme and avoid trouble. As life at the Academy becomes ever more perilous, the tension between Elwood's ideals and Turner's skepticism leads to a decision whose repercussions will echo down the decades.

Based on the real story of a reform school that operated for 111 years and warped the lives of thousands of children, *The Nickel Boys* is a devastating, driven narrative that showcases a great American novelist writing at the height of his powers.

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration

2010

Isabel Wilkerson

In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize–winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life.

From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson compares this epic migration to the migrations of other peoples in history. She interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to new data and official records, to write this definitive and vividly dramatic account of how these American journeys unfolded, altering our cities, our country, and ourselves.

With stunning historical detail, Wilkerson tells this story through the lives of three unique individuals: Ida Mae Gladney, who in 1937 left sharecropping and prejudice in Mississippi for Chicago, where she achieved quiet blue-collar success and, in old age, voted for Barack Obama when he ran for an Illinois Senate seat; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, where he endangered his job fighting for civil rights, saw his family fall, and finally found peace in God; and Robert Foster, who left Louisiana in 1953 to pursue a medical career, the personal physician to Ray Charles as part of a glitteringly successful medical career, which allowed him to purchase a grand home where he often threw exuberant parties.

Wilkerson brilliantly captures their first treacherous and exhausting cross-country trips by car and train and their new lives in colonies that grew into ghettos, as well as how they changed these cities with southern food, faith, and culture and improved them with discipline, drive, and hard work. Both a riveting microcosm and a major assessment, *The Warmth of Other Suns* is a bold, remarkable, and riveting work, a superb account of an “unrecognized immigration” within our own land. Through the breadth of its narrative, the beauty of the writing, the depth of its research, and the fullness of the people and lives portrayed herein, this book is destined to become a classic.

American Spy: A Novel

2020

Lauren Wilkinson

What if your sense of duty required you to betray the man you love?

It's 1986, the heart of the Cold War, and Marie Mitchell is an intelligence officer with the FBI. She's brilliant, but she's also a young black woman working in an old boys' club. Her career has stalled out, she's overlooked for every high-profile squad, and her days are filled with monotonous paperwork. So when she's given the opportunity to join a shadowy task force aimed at undermining Thomas Sankara, the charismatic revolutionary president of Burkina Faso whose Communist ideology has made him a target for American intervention, she says yes. Yes, even though she secretly admires the work Sankara is doing for his country. Yes, even though she is still grieving the mysterious death of her sister, whose example led Marie to this career path in the first place. Yes, even though a furious part of her suspects she's being offered the job because of her appearance and not her talent.

In the year that follows, Marie will observe Sankara, seduce him, and ultimately have a hand in the coup that will bring him down. But doing so will change everything she believes about what it means to be a spy, a lover, a sister, and a good American.

Inspired by true events—Thomas Sankara is known as “Africa’s Che Guevara”—American Spy knits together a gripping spy thriller, a heartbreaking family drama, and a passionate romance. This is a face of the Cold War you’ve never seen before, and it introduces a powerful new literary voice.

NOMINATED FOR THE NAACP IMAGE AWARD • Shortlisted for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize

Who Lynched Willie Earle?: Preaching to Confront Racism

2017

Will Willimon

Pastors and leaders long to speak an effective biblical word into the contemporary social crisis of racial violence and black pain. They need a no-nonsense strategy rooted in actual ecclesial life, illuminated in this fine book by a trustworthy guide, Will Willimon, who uses the true story of pastor Hawley Lynn’s March of 1947 sermon, “Who Lynched Willie Earle?” as an opportunity to respond to the last lynching in Greenville, South Carolina and its implications for a more faithful proclamation of the Gospel today. By hearing black pain, naming white complicity, critiquing American exceptionalism/civil religion, inviting/challenging the church to respond, and attending to the voices of African American pastors and leaders, this book helps pastors of white, mainline Protestant churches preach effectively in situations of racial violence and dis-ease.

Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion

2018

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove grew up in the Bible Belt in the American South as a faithful church-going Christian. But he gradually came to realize that the gospel his Christianity proclaimed was not good news for everybody. The same Christianity that sang, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound" also perpetuated racial injustice and white supremacy in the name of Jesus. His Christianity, he discovered, was the religion of the slaveholder.

Just as Reconstruction after the Civil War worked to repair a desperately broken society, our compromised Christianity requires a spiritual reconstruction that undoes the injustices of the past. Wilson-Hartgrove traces his journey from the religion of the slaveholder to the Christianity of Christ. Reconstructing the gospel requires facing the pain of the past and present, from racial blindness to systemic abuses of power. Grappling seriously with troubling history and theology, Wilson-Hartgrove recovers the subversiveness of the gospel that sustained the church through centuries of slavery and oppression, from the civil rights era to the Black Lives Matter movement and beyond.

When the gospel is reconstructed, freedom rings both for individuals and for society as a whole. Discover how Jesus continues to save us from ourselves and each other, to repair the breach and heal our land.

White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son

2011

Tim Wise

With a new preface and updated chapters, *White Like Me* is one-part memoir, one-part polemical essay collection. It is a personal examination of the way in which racial privilege shapes the daily lives of white Americans in every realm: employment, education, housing, criminal justice, and elsewhere.

Using stories from his own life, Tim Wise demonstrates the ways in which racism not only burdens people of color, but also benefits, in relative terms, those who are “white like him.” He discusses how racial privilege can harm whites in the long run and make progressive social change less likely. He explores the ways in which whites can challenge their unjust privileges, and explains in clear and convincing language why it is in the best interest of whites themselves to do so. Using anecdotes instead of stale statistics, Wise weaves a narrative that is at once readable and yet scholarly, analytical and yet accessible.

Native Son: A Novel

(1940)

Richard Wright

Right from the start, Bigger Thomas had been headed for jail. It could have been for assault or petty larceny; by chance, it was for murder and rape. *Native Son* tells the story of this young black man caught in a downward spiral after he kills a young white woman in a brief moment of panic. Set in Chicago in the 1930s, Richard Wright's powerful novel is an unsparing reflection on the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country and of what it means to be black in America.

Black Boy (An Autobiography)

(1945)

Richard Wright

Richard Wright's powerful account of his journey from innocence to experience in the Jim Crow South. It is at once an unashamed confession and a profound indictment--a poignant and disturbing record of social injustice and human suffering.

When *Black Boy* exploded onto the literary scene in 1945, it caused a sensation. Orville Prescott of the *New York Times* wrote that “if enough such books are written, if enough millions of people read them maybe, someday, in the fullness of time, there will be a greater understanding and a more true democracy.” Opposing forces felt compelled to comment: addressing Congress, Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi argued that the purpose of this book “was to plant seeds of hate and devilment in the minds of every American.” From 1975 to 1978, *Black Boy* was banned in schools throughout the United States for “obscenity” and “instigating hatred between the races.”

The once controversial, now classic American autobiography measures the brutality and rawness of the Jim Crow South against the sheer desperate will it took to survive. Richard Wright grew up in the woods of Mississippi, with poverty, hunger, fear, and hatred. He lied, stole, and raged at those about him; at six he was a “drunkard,” hanging about in taverns. Surly, brutal, cold, suspicious, and self-pitying, he was surrounded on one side by whites who were either indifferent to him, pitying, or cruel, and on the other by blacks who resented anyone trying to rise above the common lot. At the end of *Black Boy*, Wright sits poised with pencil in hand, determined to “hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo.”